DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 277 149 EA 019 069

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TITLE The Principal's First Year: The Mutual Process of Developing Leadership.
PUB DATE 17 Apr 86
NOTE 41p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (67th, San Francisco, CA, April 16-20, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Cooperation; Educational Environment; Elementary Education; *Instructional Leadership; Interpersonal Communication; Interschool Communication; *Principals; *Role Perception; School Community Relationship; *Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Influence; Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the mutual process by which a principal and teachers in an urban elementary school develop the principal's leadership. Data were collected for this research throughout a principal's first year through systematic observations (shadowing) of the principal; semi-structured interviews with teachers, administrators, parents, school department and school committee members as well as community people; and document collection of memos, notices, letters to parents, and other written material obtained or distributed by the school. Data show that teachers and the principal began the year with similar expectations for their roles. This congruence, plus the principal's clear expression of rules and expectations, fostered a consistent and firm structure. Her respect and genuine interest in teachers nurtured relationships that sparked a mutual development of leadership. Teachers were satisfied with her leadership because they had influence. The school environment became more cohesive as the principal became responsive and the teachers assumed responsibility beyond their classrooms. Implications are that new principals need (1) to consider the school context when setting priorities and (2) to develop good communication and select areas to work on that are visible and have a high probability of success. Eight notes and a five-page bibliography are appended. (Author/ IW)

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THE PRINCIPAL'S FIRST YEAR: THE MUTUAL PROCESS OF DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, California, April 17, 1986.

THE PRINCIPAL'S FIRST YEAR:

THE MUTUAL PROCESS OF DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

Abstract

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1986

This paper explores the mutual process by which a principal and teachers in an urban elementary school develop the principal's leadership. Data were collected for this research throughout a principal's first year through systematic observations, (shadowing) of the principal and transient observations of other schoolpeople, semi-structured interviews with teachers, administrators, parents, school department and school committee members as well as community people, and document collection of memos, notices, letters to parents and other written material obtained or distributed by the school.

Data are presented that portray the mutual development of leadership in this school. Teachers and the principal began the year with similar expectations for their roles. This congruence plus the principal's clear expression of rules and expectations fostered a consistent and firm structure. Her respect and genuine interest in teachers nurtured relationships that sparked a mutual development of leadership. Teachers were satisfied with her leadership because they had influence. The school environment became more cohesive as the principal became responsive and the teachers assumed responsibility beyond their classrooms.

This paper has implications for practice and school improvement using effective schools literature as a framework. New principals need to consider the school context when setting priorities, they need to develop good communication and select areas to work on that are visible and have a high probability of success.

THE PRINCIPAL'S FIRST YEAR: THE MUTUAL PROCESS OF DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the effective schools literature has consistently identified principals as key figures in fostering schools that successfully educate children.[1] As instructional leaders, it is important for them to have the vision, the resourcefulness, the skills to monitor children's and teachers' work as well as the ability to create a school climate that is participatory and supportive.[2] More specifically, the late Ron Edmonds' research offers a set of five factors that correlate with effective schools and also emphasize the process of school improvement that is needed for change.[3] The factors include the development of a safe, secure climate in which teachers and the principal share common goals; a strong, instructional leader who sets a mission for the school; the continual monitoring of students' progress; an emphasis on basic skills, and high expectations by teachers that all students can learn.

However, we rarely read in this research or other autobiographical accounts of principals' experiences about the process of developing this leadership, about the connections and relationships that grow between a principal and teachers that foster good work. Little attention has also been paid to specific school contexts. The constituencies of each school have different needs which provide initial constraints that the principal must work with in setting priorities.

This paper reports on a case study conducted in 1980-81 throughout a principal's initial year in an urban elementary

school in an effort to understand the process by which leadership developed. Data were collected at the Weaver School through systematic observations (shadowing) of the principal and transient[4] observations of other schoolpeople, semi-structured interviews with teachers, administrators, parents, school department and school committee members as well as community people and by collecting written materials that was obtained or distributed by the school such as memos, notices and letters to parents.

Four primary findings resulted from this research and have direct bearing on how we think about fostering processes of school improvement. First, the principal's leadership developed because she and teachers shared expectations and beliefs about schooling and teaching. Second, the principal spent time initially assessing school and community needs: she understood the context and the constraints within it and prioritized her goals based on that information. Third, she developed a solid structure (consistent rules and clear expectations for teachers and staff) and also paid attention to individuals so that they felt known and special. And finally, teachers gave the principal signals that things were going well which provided a feeling of collective effort throughout the school.

In order to understand the research context which supports this study, we will look first at some relevant literature on effective schools and leadership as well as the methodology used in this study. Because the school's context is important to an understanding of the dynamics of developing leadership, we will next look briefly at the setting - the school and community as well as the history of prior leadership and the school's central

issues leading into the first year. Then we will hear the principal's and teachers' expectations which they brought to opening day. Finally, we will examine the actions throughout the first year that exemplify significant points in the development of leadership. We will consider implications for this research in light of the effective schools literature and the process of school improvement in an elementary school.

PRIOR RESEARCH

Three bodies of literature have direct bearing on this research: 1) ethnographic studies and autobiographical reflections on principals' daily activities, 2) organizational studies of schools as social settings, and 3) works on the establishment of institutional leadership in a variety of settings. Why are these three areas useful to this study? The first presents a framework for understanding what a new principal does, with whom she interacts, how she organizes her time and what priorities she chooses and defines. Most of the research of this nature has come from social scientists writing descriptively about schools, (Jackson, 1968; Sarason, 1971; Lortie, 1975; Barth, 1982; Lightfoot, 1983) and, more specifically about principals, (Wolcott, 1973; Morris, et al, 1982; Hall et al, 1984;). This study extends such prior work. The organizational research provides insight into the dynamics of the school viewed as a social system. In examining how leadership develops, it is important to address the interactional patterns between the principal and the teachers as well as their role expectations. How is control maintained and what motivates different individuals to work together? How does the school maintain order on a daily basis and stability on a larger scale while still

adapting to system-wide and social changes? The third body of literature offers a perspective on behaviors that are common to leaders regardless of setting. It concerns issues of leadership and following, support for the leader and of the subordinates, issues related to developing trust, gaining knowledge of the organization and establishing control.

Observational research exploring principals' daily work lives was significantly advanced with Wolcott's (1973) study of a single elementary school principal and has been followed by other similar ethnographic inquiries. Several studies have provided task analyses that portray busy, fragmented days for school administrators (Weldy, 1979; Martin and Willower, 1981) with little direct time for instructional leadership or reflection (Morris et al, 1982). Daily tasks for many principals are the same: they spend sixty per cent of their time engaging in desk work, and scheduled and unscheduled meetings and only two and a half per cent of their time teaching and observing. In addition, they all monitor and tour the building to maintain control at key transitional points in the day, (Martin and Willower, 1981). Wolcott said of one principal, the "greatest part of (his) time is spent in an almost endless series of encounters...(and that) most of these encounters are face-to-face, tending to keep the principalship a highly personal role."

Much of a principal's activity is in the service of maintaining a smoothly running building and providing a climate that is conducive to learning. This is crucial not only for safety, but because the principal's authority rests on his or her ability to maintain order, (Crowson and Porter-Gehrie, 1980). Most principals believe they should maintain control through active disciplinary actions when necessary. On a more routine

basis, however, they exercise passive control by monitoring hallways and administering daily procedures such as scheduling, or the comings and goings of the buses. Thus, school-level administrators tend to behave according to implicit norms that define their hierarchical role in school management, but utilize personal discretion in face-to-face encounters concerning matters of building and pupil control.

While principals often speak of feelings of powerlessness, Crowson and Porter-Gehrie (1980) found that they cope with challenges to their authority through various discretionary behaviors. One area most commonly threatened concerns maintaining order in school. These researchers observed principals using various mechanisms to successfully meet these challenges. Many principals maintained a presence in school by patrolling hallways, eating lunch with children or dismissing classes. Continual reminders of behavior and dress codes also reinforced their position of authority. Another coping mechanism involved using wide discretion in decisions regarding student discipline and school control. Principals used a flexible application of rules and procedures for suspension and chose some people rather than others as examples of undesirable behavior.

Leadership is also influenced by the principal's understanding and acceptance of the school's culture. Dwyer (1984) found that "principals assessed their environments, knew their limitations and strengths, and understood the kinds of programs and outcomes they desired for their students,"[4] and in that way helped to fashion environments that spoke to the uniqueness of each school. In addition, he stresses that the congruence of cultural norms, beliefs and values between the principal and the school's community is a fundamental concern in

the establishment of leadership and authority.

The organizational literature on schools is large and diverse. Early writings about schools described rational. hierarchical organizations with clear roles and goals, (Getzels, 1958; Parsons, 1960; Griffiths, 1964), while more recent scholars have elaborated on these views in light of observational research that analyzes discretionary behaviors (Corwin, 1976; Lipsky, 1976; Weick, 1976; Deal, 1977). These researchers have given credence to the seemingly inexplicable, irrational and discretionary activities that fall outside the predictable norms, which they say provide the substance of organizational control. Teachers and principals continue to perform their roles because norms are clearly defined, not because of tight and direct supervision or even coercion.

In recent years, some principals have used their discretionary power to make organizational reforms through school improvement programs which are based on the effective schools literature. Researchers (Weber, 1971; Brookover and Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1979; Shoemaker and Fraser, 1981) identified factors in schools which correlate with school effectiveness. Throughout the effective schools literature, the process of change is emphasized rather than the content of programs. Content is determined by the local schools and allows for activities that will meet the needs of individual schools, their constituencies and the personalities of the actors.

The third body of literature that informs this study looks at how administrative leadership is established in other organizations as well as schools. Political scientists (Chemers, 1984) have defined and explored the dynamics of leadership by considering traits and behaviors of leaders. Carlson (1962) has

considered "insider/outsider" differences which focus on the relationship of one's previous position to the new one. An insider, one who is promoted from within, tends to be place-bound and faces a well-defined, structured and relatively unaltered social system, while the outsider, one who attains the new position by moving to a new district, is career-oriented and faces a social system that has been "temporarily suspended because of his arriveal," (Ganz and Hoy, 1977). Outsiders are more likely to make initial changes while insiders maintain the status quo in a more familiar setting.

These three bodies of literature provide a context for viewing the development of leadership at Weaver. The ethnographic research offers a rich, descriptive picture in which to consider the behaviors of the principal and teachers. With this perspective, we see and hear the actors in order to know the quality of their interactions. Within this framework, we consider how the principal maintains authority, uses discretionary behaviors, and builds a structure of rules and procedures and forms relationships that support good teaching. The organizational literature offers a view of the school, as a social system. It is useful in considering the norms for role expectations, how the principal conveys her expectations that she brings with her as well as those she develops upon assessing the school's needs. Within this framework, we compare expectations of the principal and teachers and see the difference that congruence makes to the development of the structure. This organizational view also offers a framework for considering the implications of this research for principals who are embarking on a process of school improvement. The third view provides a perspective on leadership in institutions where variables in the setting and

characteristics of leaders affect the development of leadership.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data were collected for this study throughout the 1980-81 school year by shadowing the principal and systematically observing her interactions with teachers, staff, parents and members of the school department and community; through interviewing the principal, teachers, and the guidance counselor, parents and the superintendent with semi-structured interview agendas; and by collecting documents generated and received by the school.

Shadowing meant that I followed the principal, Celia Columbo, continually during the day, through her varied experiences and interactions. I usually spent three days a week in the school, arriving at seven forty-five in time to see teachers arrive and staying until children, teachers and the principal went home. In addition, I accompanied Ms. Columbo to meetings - special inservice and regular monthly administrative meetings, desegregation planning sessions, evaluation and parent/teacher meetings - as well as school social functions. While I was in school, I continually recorded the principal's conversations as well as my observations in notebooks including the date and time of each event. Throughout data collection, I looked for patterns and emerging themes that further informed my inquiry. I sat close enough to the actors to hear their words and see their expressions, but not so near that they would be too self-conscious. After each day, these records were typed and marginal interpretive notes were added. Toward the second half of the academic year, I spent some time "hanging out" in teachers' rooms; this gave me insight into teachers' thoughts and

feelings away from the principal.

In addition to observations, I learned about the development of leadership at Weaver through semi-structured interviews with the principal, teachers, guidance counselor, parents and the superintendent. Between October, 1980 and January 1981 I spoke with eleven teachers and the guidance counselor; in January, 1985 I interviewed three of those teachers again. Out of a total of thirty-four full-time classroom teachers, I selected one teacher from each grade. In addition, there are representatives from special needs and the bilingual classes as well as a "specialist." I conducted four separate interviews with Ms. Columbo during the data collection year in early and late October, January and May and one more in January 1985. These were spaced to obtain her perspective at the beginning, the middle and the end. I interviewed the superintendent in February, 1981.

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews in order to encourage respondents to talk freely, and to express their ideas and feelings concerning the development of leadership in their school. This enabled me to pursue themes that were evolving and to explore new ideas. As the year progressed, it was useful to triangulate information received through observations and documents with the interview material. Because I was present over the entire year, I could explore hypotheses that were disconfirmed by the previous data through more focused observations. Casual conversations became more accessible as I gained familiarity with teachers and was able to observe them and the principal in more informal settings such as parties, teachers' rooms, and lunches with the principal.

Documents received and generated by the school were saved for me throughout the year by the secretary and the principal in a

mailbox. These gave me a larger view of the school as an organization involved with families and the community. Notices to parents, memos to teachers, communications from the central office, organizational lists of students and faculty, floor plans and the like informed me of the principal's priorities and style of communication. Teachers' responses to written communication provided insight into some aspects of their relationships with authority figures.

THE SETTING

The Weaver school lies in a largely Portuguese, blue-collar neighborhood at the edge of a city of one-hundred and two thousand people. Unlike other more residential areas of the city, this neighborhood is home to three small manufacturing industries, a shoe factory, a stonemasonry and a chocolate factory. In addition to the Portuguese, other blue-collar ethnic groups also live and work here. Italians, Greeks, some Germans and Irish settled prior to the Portuguese and continue to send their children to the Weaver school as well.

What is apparent, however, and significant to this study, is the absence of blacks. According to a voluntary desegregation plan, the city's schools were in the process of becoming racially balanced: this was the last year before this largely white school merged with a predominantly black school from the other side of town. However, the isolation of the Portuguese immigrants plus the nonexistence of black people in this neighborhood contributed to rising tensions within the school concerning the impending merger.

The school is large - three floors high, three blocks long and two blocks wide - and from the outside it has a clean, modern

look. Weaver was constructed in 1971 and in a system with thirteen K-8 schools and one high school, this was still the most recently built building. Inside, the long, airy red-brick walls provide a warmth which is nicely complemented by the bright, primary- colored vertical beams and doors on each floor. Classrooms surround large open spaces which form an inner core and house the library and language labs.

As I walked along the corridors, I was impressed by the order, cleanliness and large size of the building. Five hundred and forty-eight students attended K-8 grades as well as six bilingual classes, four special needs self-contained classes and a wide assortment of specialists. Children with special needs could also see the school psychologist, the vision teachers, the generic specialist and the resource center teachers. Bilingual students had a Portuguese-speaking SLD teacher and a guidance counselor if they needed them. At the time of this study, academic specialists also regularly offered music, art, French, industrial arts, home economics and remedial reading.

ISSUES LEADING INTO THE FIRST YEAR

As with most schools, Weaver was affected by national, regional and community issues which influenced the selection of the new principal and reaction to her. The tax cutting referendum known as Proposition 2 1/2 was on the November ballot and, if passed, would cut numerous city employees from the payroll. Because this city had so many experienced, tenured teachers, there was a likelihood that many of those who had been teaching for nine, ten or eleven years would lose their jobs the following year. Uncertainty as to the cut-off date caused much anxiety in the months surrounding the election.

Tensions were also high because people in the community were prejudiced against the Portuguese and the Blacks. However, there were different feelings for these two groups. The Portuguese lived in the neighborhood, kept to themselves, and were regarded by the Irish, Italians and other groups with a distant skepticism. Blacks, however, didn't live in the neighborhood and were not welcome. While all other schools in the system proceded with desegregation, the superintendent had postponed this action at the Weaver in an attempt to develop greater communication and understanding between the two communities. He favored Ms. Columbo to be principal because she was familiar to the community and might be better able to soothe angry parents after the merger. He also knew he could count on her for support and information. The Superintendent told me, "She is tough, she's honest and she's always played it straight with me."

In addition, with the advent of the bilingual program, more Portuguese students joined others from the neighborhood. This community had placed enormous hopes on the opening of the new school to "alleviate much of the difficulty" that the Portuguese children were having. But there was still concern that the new building was not sufficient: the Portuguese guidance counselor told me that "children needed sympathetic people who understood their culture to work with them."

PRIOR LEADERSHIP AT THE WEAVER

The history of leadership at the Weaver is important to understand because it, in part, shaped teachers' needs and expectations of their new administrator and contributed toward the new principal's expectations and attitudes of the school.

In 1968, the School Committee, like so many others in systems

with declining enrollments and small, old buildings, decided to close three smaller schools and build a modern and much larger facility that would provide needed community services, special needs classes and a bilingual program. The Weaver school, therefore, developed from a merger of three smaller schools and was administered at one time or another during the past fifteen years by all the former principals of those smaller schools.

Because of these school closings, many teachers remembered those early years as being especially fragmented due to faculty/student alliances established in the former schools. Teachers naturally clustered with their friends and there was little feeling of cohesion. The administrators from the smaller schools were described as "not strong leaders" so that teachers felt they were left to "do their own thing." Many appreciated this with respect to curriculum and instruction within their classrooms, but felt they lacked guidelines for discipline matters.

As we begin to understand teachers' expectations, attitudes and behaviors during the first year, it is especially useful to look at the administrative style of the principal who preceded Ms. Columbo. Tom Chauncey was a graduate of Boston College, had a Jesuit background and had been in the school system since he was young. Although he had planned to retire the preceding June, he decided to remain one more year to see the Weaver through the desegregation planning. However, teachers reported that his negative attitude was pervasive: he rarely gave praise, seldom observed in classrooms and rarely attended school events. He developed a reputation for not respecting teachers, not paying attention to their requests and even ridiculing them in public. One teacher describes well the effect that this had:

> And through those past years there was very little administrative support: they would never come to the games, they would never see or encourage us...and if somebody put on a production in the auditorium they were never complimented or praised...and were more or less ridiculed behind the scenes. That was demeaning to a lot of people; people just didn't want to do anything extra....You can give anybody a job doing anything and you can pay them nothing and as long as they receive some sort of compliment they'll do it and keep doing it.

Throughout that last year, Mr. Chauncey hid from teachers and was generally unresponsive. They asked him to use the intercom only twice a day, but he continued to make announcements at will. Several teachers commented that his moods often determined his actions and they were often unpredictable. When he was visible, one teacher noticed that, "he was visibly upset." However, while he was not empathetic with teachers, he provided curriculum direction and managed the budget and other technical details well. He mandated cross grouping in math, but never followed up on these requirements or asked teachers about instructional matters. While he valued a traditional approach to discipline, teachers said he didn't provide them with enough support in specific instances with children.

Mr. Chauncey's lack of personal involvement in the teachers' and students' work meant that schoolpeople retreated as he did behind closed doors, did little more than was required and some even questioned their professional and personal skills. Women especially, were put off by his chauvinist remarks and "locker room jokes" that permeated the front office. The faculty volleyball game that once inspired two teams' worth of players to stay after school was no longer scheduled.

THE FIRST YEAR: THE PRINCIPAL'S EXPECTATIONS

Ms. Columbo is a white, fifty year old woman whose large size and bruskness are initially apparent and give her a commanding appearance. She talks freely and jokes often about how she gained so much weight and remembers when she "topped two-hundred pounds." On many days when she doesn't have to attend a meeting outside the building, she wears Hawaiian print blouses over polyester pants. Her friendliness is evident with each visitor to the office. She asks several questions about something of interest to the visitor, comments about a recent event or a current situation. Some people feel her quick answers come without thought, but others appreciate her range of knowledge.

Ms. Columbo's professional career has followed a sequence common to teachers. After completing high school, she gained Bachelor's and Master's degrees in education and taught grades one, three, five and eight for sixteen years. As she became involved in more varied educational programs, (Head Start summer school, Adult Evening school for non-English-speaking adults, and a transitional first grade experiment at another school in the system) she simultaneously enrolled in advanced education courses that led to a Certificate of Advanced Study degree. Those courses reflect her continuing interests in practical and logical matters: courses covered school finance, grants management, and the law as well as several leadership courses. Others were in school-community relationships, curriculum development and innovation and change.

Ms. Columbo's early experiences in a first-generation Italian family fostered her understanding and empathy toward other immigrants and, more specifically, the parents in the Weaver community. Because she was a life-long resident of the city with

roots going back to her maternal grandparents, she not only had many friends throughout the school system and in political leadership, but she understood the city's history, issues and personalities.

Since her teaching days, Ms. Columbo maintained a consistent career in this school system. After teaching for sixteen years, she was the Acting Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent for one year until assuming her first principalship in 1975. Throughout this time, she was active on a variety of committees - for interviewing, evaluation, and racial balance - that strengthened her visibility in the system and developed her reputation as an organized, hard worker - a "tough cookie" - and one who will be straightforward in "telling it like it is." Thus, she was well known and brought to the Weaver background information about the school system.

According to Ms. Columbo, the school's most pressing needs were largely interpersonal: faculty members felt isolated, there was a need for a consistent, school-wide code of discipline, and some Portuguese and American students had a difficult time getting along. She expected that her initial responsibilities included "getting the building under control" by fostering strong discipline. However, while she considered herself to be a "strict disciplinarian," she worried that the Weaver would test her beyond her abilities. Having come from a small, K-6 school, she feared that a large school with seventh and eighth graders would present situations she was unaccustomed to handling.

She also felt a primary need was to improve cohesion. Faculty members felt isolated, discipline was inconsistent and there was conflict between some Portuguese and American students. Ms. Columbo cared about fostering positive relationships within the

school and felt there was potential for greater unity because faculty had been together for so long and were generally friendly. At meetings, she also clearly voiced her expectations for cooperation and brought food to literally and figuratively nourish teachers. In general, she fostered a sense of unity with references to "we." And she acknowledged teachers' feelings, whether individually in her office or collectively during meetings. Every day she sought contact with teachers and students during morning entry and afternoon dismissal, asking a teacher or two how their days had been or admiring a student's work. One Friday afternoon after a taxing day, she asked a child to explain how he made a papier mache' animal and listened to his description with great attention. Her genuine pleasure at this involvement conveyed more of her interest than the questions themselves.

Ms. Columbo enjoyed talking and her expectation for good communication was more than an administrative tactic: it was an intrinsic part of her personality which she felt was both a strength and a weakness:

> You have to keep communication open. You have to tell (teachers) what is happening. Otherwise they make suppositions and the suppositions are usually negative or incorrect. I said to them at my first staff meeting, 'Don't second-guess me; come down and ask.'

However, sometimes they did too frequently:

> I seem to precipitate a lot of people coming and going, for some reason....It's a weakness if I let it go on....

After a childhood in which she described herself as having been a "loner," she now craved involvement with others. This, I believe, was one reason why she so willingly allowed me to shadow her throughout the year. Her need for contact motivated her

communication with teachers and sensitized her to their feelings about her.

Assuredly, one of the most challenging needs of the school was the problematic relationship between the Portuguese-Americans and native-born Americans. Ms. Columbo brought to this situation a strong identification with immigrants' needs and values based on her upbringing in a "segregated" section of the city. She knew of - and often spoke emotionally about - the need to "cluster," in order to "keep the culture and keep the language." But she strongly believed that children from immigrant homes should submerge their native ways in order to become Americans. Many faculty members appreciated her working class roots and shared her values concerning assimilation.

While Ms. Columbo had strong feelings about immigrants and the teaching profession, she usually presented herself in an unemotional manner. She spoke bruskly and directly and had a reputation around town for being politically astute. Quick thinking, knowledge of school department rules and responsibilities, and most importantly, an air of assurance fostered other people's trust in her. She usually exhibited confidence in her decisions and expected teachers to comply or directly challenge her. In an effort to "help teachers help kids," Ms. Columbo also expected that as principal she should provide answers to teachers' questions and create systems to facilitate their work. To this end, she used her prior teaching experiences well by remembering small details that could be translated into new situations.

Ms. Columbo firmly believed in persuasion as a means to influence decisions and hoped to model a rational approach to change for teachers:

> I make sure that I win only to meet the system's goals, not to meet my personal goals. In other words, if I disagree with a teacher, I don't say, 'You have to do this because I am the principal.' I try to make the teacher see my point. I don't like to argue; I like to debate and I like to discuss and philosophize, but not to scream and argue....It is not logical for any administrator to try to push....My idea is not to put anyone on the defensive because as soon as you (do that) you've lost your battle and that's when you get into arguments.

In addition to her expectations of <u>what</u> she should do, Ms. Columbo was particularly self-aware about the influence of her personality, values and beliefs on others. It was about these matters that she spoke so perceptively. Ms. Columbo's childhood experiences governed much of what she shared with teachers and students at Weaver. Central to her life was the importance of creating moral, fair and trusting relationships with people. Consequently, social and organizational rules and laws took on significance because they formalized civilized relationships between people.

Ms. Columbo expected that as principal she ought to be sensitive to teachers' needs and to develop supportive, individualized relationships with them. To do this, she felt she should know them and their classes to the extent that she could respond to specific children's needs, if necessary. In addition, she wanted to protect herself and teachers by ensuring that all special needs students were receiving appropriate services. Her relationships with staff were formed through many small interactions - in the hall, early in the morning at the sign-in sheet, passing through the library - as well as the longer, more formal conversations in her office about specific issues and children that she called "run-downs."

Consistent with the norms of the community, Ms. Columbo

had traditional expectations for teachers:

> I expect from teachers mundane things like being on time and going home, certainly not before the bell and not much thereafter. I expect them to know the curriculum and to keep at it and teach the kids, and I expect them to treat the children like human beings. I expect them to be fair in their behavior with discipline procedures. I had to teach some of them that you had to listen to both sides of the story.

When a quiet, new third grade teacher arrived at Weaver, thankful to have a job, Ms. Columbo explained her instructional expectations succinctly. She wanted all teachers to work cooperatively, to "rule with a loving hand," to learn the curriculum and "use the manuals." After rapidly listing these goals, her tone softened, "Come to see me if you have any problems; don't be one of those who handles it alone, afraid that 'She'll think I'm terrible if I come to her.'"

THE FIRST YEAR: TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS

Despite the large number of teachers in the Weaver school, many shared expectations for the principal's role. Teachers talked about what they believed were pressing school needs and how they should be met, and their desire for a principal who preferred an interpersonal style of leadership. They had only a few expectations for the principal's involvement in instructional matters or the community.

Remembering the stability of former years in their smaller schools, many teachers spoke of wanting greater cohesion and stricter discipline. They expected consistent rules and support from the office in resolving difficult conflicts. While many teachers disagreed that conflicts between Portuguese and American students were frequent enough to warrant concern outside the

classroom, they worried that the impending merger would increase tensions. In addition, they disliked the social isolation of their classrooms even though they preferred full instructional responsibility. In past years, they had enjoyed a faculty volleyball game and shared pot-luck dinners. With a new principal, they hoped these social gatherings would be revitalized.

While many teachers agreed on priorities, some were concerned about how the new principal would assess their needs and make changes. One teacher was particularly concerned about the assessment process and how policy would be developed. Because she wanted a say in these matters, she hoped Ms. Columbo would retain those policies and procedures that worked well and would wait to make changes until she had carefully evaluated each one. This would give teachers time to present their ideas. She told me,

> The kind of thing a (principal) has to do when coming into a building is to look at the people and say, "This unit has been working together, let me take a look and see what they're doing, and then I'll impose policy, if necessary, or swim along with the rest of the guys as lead fish. Or these people are all going one way and on the other hand I'm going to have to jump in and get them all together with a big rope."

Two other teachers worried that changes would interfere with their customary teaching routines and feared additional demands made on them:

> I think for the most part teachers are creatures of habit and they have to know exactly how their habits are going to be accommodated and to have that all set up on the first day is great.

While acknowledging that administrative change was bound to affect teachers' daily lives, this same teacher later added that "reasonable" changes might be tolerable:

> So if somebody comes in, and if the changes

> are fair - I mean you are going to be apprehensive about the changes, you don't know what to expect about them, but as long as they are fair changes and reasonable, I think there is no problem. I think if the principal also puts (herself) in the position of the teachers, (she) understands what teachers want.

One way that changes could be understood as being reasonable is when they are presented with plausible justification. Teachers at Weaver hoped their new principal would provide explanations for new procedures rather than notify them of decisions already made. In addition, many were more accepting of her requests based on personal preferences if they seemed fair and a positive relationship had developed between them first.

Teachers spoke in different ways of their expectations for a relationship with the new principal. After many years of being humiliated by the former administrator, they wanted her to notice and respect them, to empathize, to remember the daily pressure and joys of the classroom. They hoped that her memories of teaching would provide a basis for realistic expectations and perhaps greater support. After so much instability and Tom Chauncey's negative attitude, teachers were also looking for a more positive outlook to greet them in the mornings.

In part, because of the former principal's moodiness and lack of commitment or follow-through, teachers had high expectations for a new administrator to be honest, consistent and fair with them:

> You have to have someone in that office who is as honest with me as I try to be with my children. If I don't know where I stand, I'm a dead duck. If you tell me I have to be this and there on such and such a day...then I can do it; if I don't know what's expected of me then I can't function....If the person who tells me what to do is that prepared and straightforward (as I am) then I'm OK.

And many said that they needed more praise and feedback

telling them that they were doing a good job:

> And it's very important when you work, to get some positive feedback. As a teacher, you learn the best thing that's absolutely imperative with children is if they don't get a positive response to what they're doing, they're not going to respond to you. And it's the same with people working with people. If they feel as though they don't exist or they make no difference, they just won't put out for you. You don't want to do anything after school if they don't notice it.

Teachers also came to the new principal for answers to questions, and her ability to provide information with confidence contributed to their feelings of trust. Her knowledge of the school system's rules and regulations helped teachers find what they needed easily and her contacts with school department personnel facilitated results.

Several teachers agreed that the new principal should like children and evidence that by taking an active interest in what they are doing. They emphasized the importance of her visibility, though they felt she should remain in hallways and other communal places rather than classrooms.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP: BUILDING THE STRUCTURE

Teachers knew when they arrived at school on the first morning of the new school year that Ms. Columbo was in charge. She greeted them with assurance at the opening meeting in the library with individual folders containing sixteen documents: school rules, rosters for each class, the annual calendar, a floor plan, specialists' schedules, a bell schedule, dates and rules for marking periods, sample attendance forms and several pages of procedural notes. In addition, she included copies of notices to parents for teachers' information. This organization and the rapid pace that was to follow was the hallmark of a

structure teachers came to appreciate throughout the year. Clarity of expectations and rules provided support and "comfort" to many teachers. Teachers said they were "grateful" for the materials they received and "knew exactly where they stood" as far as building procedures went. Rarely, after this initial meeting, did they have questions concerning daily routines.

Also evident at that first meeting, was Ms. Columbo's ability to predict possible problems and provide systems for managing them in advance. Her memory and understanding of classroom realities made these projections possible and were guidelines for action. She explained to me on several occasions that experiences formed her primary bases for acting and that knowledge of another's experience is best gained through living that experience. In her estimation, one gained empathy through experience and she criticized other principals and superintendents who hadn't experienced their subordinate's roles.

Along with information about bell schedules, lunchroom, dismissal and hall procedures, Ms. Columbo also developed a structure by maintaining strict discipline. Her large size and tough demeanor gave a message, as one central office colleague put it, "If I were a kid and Ms. Columbo said not to do something, I wouldn't think twice about doing it." Her clear words and forceful tone conveyed power. Rules were consistent, although she paid attention to individual circumstances in evaluating consequences for infractions.

Ms. Columbo told me this image of strength was particularly important in an urban school:

> My first function was to show everybody that was watching me that I could handle myself in the job....It is a very serious thing for any principal in an urban situation to let down his or her guard or to show any sign of weakness to anybody....You have to know what

you are talking about.

Apparently, Ms. Columbo seemed successful in this to at least one teacher who told me:

> she doesn't appear meek! And it's not her size - it's the way she carries herself, what she has to say. Maybe she doesn't always know the total situation, but she talks like she does.

Another way that this principal maintained discipline was by acting immediately in response to students' misbehaviors. She developed consequences for these actions that seemed fair and appropriate to teachers.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP: FORMING RELATIONSHIPS

In addition to creating a structure of consistent rules and procedures that teachers could depend on, Ms. Columbo also quickly formed relationships with teachers, students, staff and, not as easily, with parents. Most obviously, she paid attention to teachers as individuals, recognizing their actions or comments that previously had gone unnoticed. Every morning she met the children when they arrived and each afternoon she stood at the front door asking children and teachers how their day had been. Many principals do this, but to Weaver teachers there seemed the be an authenticity to Ms. Columbo's questions because she really listened to the answers. These interactions were mutually satisfying because, as one teacher said, sometimes Ms. Columbo wanted to hear about teachers' days when hers was particularly difficult. This was one way for her to "get a lift." Another, was to spend some time with the younger children who obviously gave her great pleasure. Her eyes sparkled when she met a child in the hallway or when she talked about her first grade teaching days.

Not only was Ms. Columbo interested in teachers' classroom activities, she tried to meet their needs and requests. For the

first time in several years, the intercom was used twice a day rather than at the principal's whim. This was a symbolic as well as practical change. She also paid attention to teachers by giving to them. She offered the faculty tangibles such as candies, key chains and "Weaver School" pencils as well as coffee and doughnuts at every meeting. And she gave them intangibles that many said made them "feel more professional." She respected and trusted them and had confidence in their instructional competence.

In addition, she offered them responsibility for some school-wide decisions. Ms. Columbo assumed that teachers would act in the best interest of their children once they were given resources and encouragement. As the year progressed, it was clear teachers had responsibility for decisions concerning instructional matters, textbook selection and appropriate services for students. Issues presented to teachers for discussion were resolved by majority vote after informative and persuasive discussions. Ms. Columbo stressed to me that she disliked "announcing" rules to teachers beyond the initial schedules because she felt they should participate in their development.

In addition to giving teachers responsibility, Ms. Columbo also praised them frequently and enthusiastically. Whether it was described as "feedback," "praise," or "support," many people at Weaver commented on feeling noticed and were more enthusiastic about their work due to the principal's direct, positive comments. In turn, teachers gradually reciprocated with praise and concern for Ms. Columbo. As the year progressed, teachers shared their good feelings toward her and noticed small things that she was doing for them.

The dialogue that developed between the principal and teachers can be seen as a mutual effort to establish Ms. Columbo's leadership. We don't often have a glimpse into the mutuality of the relationships between principals and teachers. Frequently, those relationships are deemphasized by researchers and practitioners in favor of the stereotypic image of the good leader as the stern, father figure.[7] In this school, that image was replaced by the nurturing, sensitive woman who also needed care and connections.

Increasingly throughout the year, Ms. Columbo and teachers gave feedback to each other, developed relationships and together created a learning environment that enabled them to do their best work. This give and take was possible initially because Ms. Columbo cared about teachers and took the time to pay attention to specific needs. With this attention, teachers began to think of her as a person rather than as a role. One teacher told me she made a point of sending children down to the office to display good work because Ms. Columbo loved to see it. The verbal atmosphere inspired by Ms. Columbo's social nature also contributed to these connections. Teachers knew that she would "always take a stand," and they were encouraged to speak their minds as well. Gradually, as one teacher said, teachers "learned to ask for what they wanted," - and more often, received it.

Feedback encouraged and motivated the principal and teachers to become more engaged in school matters and provided landmarks through the year for evaluating how things were going. Ms. Columbo said she knew things were going well when she heard from a friend at another school that rumors around the city said she was "doing great." Feedback from teachers gave her similar support.

Good communication evolved with many teachers and fostered respect and trust. The principal said she was never shy about "telling it like it is," and this directness often alleviated anxiety and confusion. At one of the first meetings, Ms. Columbo said, "I'm sizing you up just as you're sizing me up," and this explicit observation seemed to alleviate some anxiety about this normal, yet often unspoken, behavior.

By spring, when layoffs from Proposition 2 1/2 were announced, many teachers were comforted by this new fellowship. At a staff meeting, Ms. Columbo encouraged discussion of their plight, talked of the large number of teachers who received pink slips and the unjustness of removing gym teachers from the school. She suggested teachers talk with the Teachers Association representative and, with genuine concern added, "This may sound stupid, but the show must go on. Every day is a new day." She was clearly on their side and unrelentingly persevering in her efforts to help them.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This research has implications for first-year principals as they begin a process to improve their schools. If we return to the effective schools literature cited earlier, we can use this framework to understand the implications of the mutual development of leadership at Weaver for other practitioners.

The late Ron Edmonds' research suggests factors that correlate with effective schooling, but does not address the process by which they will develop. A process of school improvement rests upon good communication between the principal and teachers. With this, they can together assess school needs, establish priorities and develop an educational plan which

specifies goals and activities that meets those needs.

The initial congruence of the principal's and teachers' expectations at Weaver provided a common foundation on which to develop good communication. The implication here is that other schools need to develop congruence if they aren't so fortunate as to start out with it. We can think of this as the beginning of the process of school improvement. A shared vision of the school is a prerequisite for making school-wide changes in instruction, teacher expectations or other areas. Consistency between faculty and the principal is also important so that efforts by different people are not counterproductive.

Other implications of this research concern the principal's assessment of the school situation and the setting of priorities. Upon entering any new school, the principal is faced with a variety of constituencies: the community, parents, teachers and the superintendent. These are constraints she must deal with in determining an initial direction. Her personality, strengths and weaknesses are also constraints. Ms. Columbo arrived in August with knowledge of community concerns about violence, a mandate from the superintendent to maintain strict discipline in the face of the imminent merger, and teachers who were feeling isolated. In setting priorities, she chose to work on some areas and not others based on her strengths and the desires of these constituencies.

There are two implications from these choices. New principals need to consider the school context when they arrive. All schools are not the same and principals are different as well. The school's history, actors, resources and local issues need to be considered in determining priorities. This is particularly relevant to effective schools programs. Most of these programs

describe factors which schools need to develop in order to become more effective, but they don't consider local variations that inform the activities which bring these factors about." At Weaver, for instance, the principal recognized that strict discipline was needed prior to the merger in order to minimize violence. She intended to improve school climate by creating clear and consistent rules. In another school, we might find strong discipline, but also an apathetic faculty. School climate in this situation would need to be addressed in a different way: by creating situations where teachers work together or have more involvement in decision making.

A second implication from these choices is that principals need to select areas to work on that are visible, have a high probability of success, and which are likely to gain them credibility. Teachers participated in school-wide improvement when they saw and felt the principal's support. She gained credibility by answering teachers' questions and providing specific experiences that were helpful to them in their classrooms. With credibility, principals can gain room to move beyond some of the initial constraints found in the school. Teachers may then rely on the principals' judgement while also retaining their participatory role.

A final implication from this study comes from Ms. Columbo's choice to develop school climate before paying attention to instuctional matters. Principals have to set priorities: they can't do everything at once. With success from one area, there is greater likelihood of the principal and teachers working together toward other factors in need of improvement. In Weaver, teachers were encouraged to participate, their actions strengthened the principal's leadership and a shared mission developed.

Principals arriving at schools would do well to assess the context: the needs of the various constituencies as well as their own strengths and weaknesses. Then they must make some choices. Choices that are visible, have a reasonable chance for success and that provide credibility for the principal are often the wisest ones. We have seen at Weaver that a participatory faculty strengthened cohesion in the school. That is an important first step in developing a positive school climate - a safe and orderly work environment - which can provide a context for further growth.

NOTES

1. For research on effective schools, see Edmonds, R., "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor," Educational Leadership, V.37, October 1979, p. 15-27; Brookover, W.B. and L.W. Lezotte, "Changes in School Characteristics Coincident with Changes in Student Achievement," East Lansing, Michigan State University, College of Urban Development, 1979; Weber, G., Inner City Children Can Be Taught to Read: Four Successful Schools, Council for Basic Education, Washington, D.C., 1971; Shoemaker, J. and H. Fraser, "What Principals Can Do: Some Implications from Studies of Effective Schooling," Phi Delta Kappan, V.63, November 1981, p. 178-82.

2. The Principal as Instructional Leader: Reflections on Effectiveness, (film), Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, Va., 1984.

3. Edmonds, R., op. cit.

4. This is Jerry Murphy's term for observations made of others as one is observing a key informant.

5. Wolcott, H.F., The Man in the Principal's Office, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., NY, 1973, p. 88.

6. Dwyer, D.C., "The Search for Instructional Leadership: Routines and Subtleties in the Principal's Role," Educational Leadership, V.41, No.5, February 1984, p. 33.

7. For discussions of how differences between men and women affect leadership, see Carol Gilligan, In A Different Voice, and Sara Lawrence Lightfoot, The Good High School, Chapter Seven.

8. Neufeld, B. et al, "A Review of the Effective Schools Research: The Message for Secondary Schools," prepared for the National Commission on Excellence in Education, January 1983, p. 7.

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